How they voted

WASHINGTON — Here's how area members of Congress were recorded on major roll call votes in the week ending March 13.

House

Trade with Africa

By a vote of 233 for and 186 against, the House passed a bill (HR 1432)seeks to increase U. S. trade with and investment in the 48 countries of sub-Saharan Africa. It removes quotas on textile and apparel imports from Kenya and Mauritius, broadens a president's authority to waive import duties, urges the establishment of country-by-country free-trade agreements, and earmarks $650 million for developing commercial infrastructure. How much a country is helped would depend on factors such as its respect for human rights, commitment to free-market economic reforms, recognition of intellectual property rights, and curbs on government corruption.

The bill reduces U.S. tariff receipts by an estimated $231 million over six years. Sponsors said the loss would be offset by tax code changes that tighten IRS treatment of deferred severance pay.

A yes vote was to pass the bill.

Georgia: Voting yes: Cynthia McKinney, D-4, John Lewis, D-5, Newt Gingrich, R-6, John Linder, R-11.

Voting no: Jack Kingston, R-1, Sanford Bishop, D-2, Michael Collins, R-3, Bob Barr, R-7, Saxby Chambliss, R-8, Nathan Deal, R-9, Charlie Norwood, R-10.

Not voting: None.

Property rights

The House passed, 230 for and 180 against, a bill (HR 992) to help those who file lawsuits claiming government has wrongfully taken their property. These "takings" suits sometimes allege, for example, that environmental regulations have diminished Fifth Amendment property rights guarantees. The bill gives the U.S. Court of Claims equal standing with federal district courts to provide full relief in takings suits. It streamlines the present split system by which requests for injunctive relief are heard in district court and claims for damages are heard by the Court of Claims.

A yes vote was to pass the bill.

Georgia: Voting yes: Kingston, Bishop, Collins, Barr, Chambliss, Deal, Norwood, Linder.

Voting no: McKinney, John Lewis.

Not voting: Gingrich.

Government performance

Voting 242 for and 168 against, the House passed a bill (HR 2883) requiring federal agencies to implement another strategic plan for improving their performance. They must seek to eliminate duplicative functions, upgrade information and accounting systems, correct areas of waste, fraud, and mismanagement, and report on these efforts to Congress. The GOP bill follows a 1993 law that required the executive branch to begin using private- sector tools for improving efficiency. It also comes in the wake of the National Performance Review headed by Vice President Gore, a "reinventing government" initiative expected to figure in his presidential campaign.

A yes vote was to pass the bill.

Georgia: Voting yes: Kingston, Collins, Barr, Chambliss, Deal, Norwood, Linder.

Voting no: Bishop, McKinney, John Lewis.

Not voting: Gingrich.

Senate

Highway funds

By a vote of 96 for and four against, the Senate passed a bill (S 1173) that authorizes about $214 billion in transportation grants to the states over the next six years, about 40 percent over current levels. Highway construction gets $173 billion and mass transit $41.3 billion. The bill funds specialty areas such as repairing the nation's 526 covered bridges and upgrading "trade corridor" highways to Mexico. It allocates the full 18.3 cents-per-gallon U.S. gasoline tax to transportation spending, and guarantees that states will get back at least 91 cents for every gas tax dollar they send to Washington. Twenty "donor" states will get less than one dollar back. To avoid funding cuts, states will have to outlaw drinking in moving vehicles and adopt a blood alcohol level of 0.08 percent for defining drunk driving. Ten percent of funding is set aside for contracts to minority- and women-owned firms.

A yes vote was to pass the bill.

Georgia: Paul Coverdell, R, voted yes. Max Cleland, D, voted yes.

South Carolina: Strom Thurmond, R, voted yes. Ernest Hollings, D, voted yes.

Ethanol subsidies

The Senate voted, 71 for and 26 against, to preserve tax credits for producers of ethanol, an alternative fuel derived from corn. The vote killed an amendment to end the credits when they expire in 2000. It upheld language in S 1173 (above) to extend ethanol subsidies until 2007, at a cost to the Treasury of about $3.8 billion. Ethanol producers including Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM) have received about $10 billion in tax credits and loan guarantees since 1980, according to floor debate. The subsidies were begun as an effort to lessen U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

A yes vote was to extend tax breaks for ethanol producers.

Georgia: Coverdell voted no. Cleland voted yes.

South Carolina: Thurmond voted yes. Hollings voted yes.

This week

The House debates whether to withdraw U.S. troops from Bosnia and takes up a State Department bill with a dispute expected over family planning. The Senate debates an expansion of Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs).

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